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~~TOP SECRET~~  
~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

February 4, 1959

To: EUR - Mr. Kohler  
From: BNA - Woodbury Willoughby  
Subject: Request for Canadian Approval under "XYZ Procedures" of  
SAC Exercise "Airborne Alert"

Downgraded To: ~~SECRET~~ - CONFIDENTIAL  
EO 11652: XGDS (1) 2 (3) 4  
Authorized by: R. D. Brewster  
August 4, 1975

The attached letter for Mr. Murphy's signature constitutes a request to the Canadian Government for advance approval in principle of a SAC exercise called "Airborne Alert" which is scheduled for the period March-June 1959 and will involve overflights of Canadian territory by SAC aircraft carrying nuclear components.

Clearances of overflights of Canadian territory by SAC aircraft are governed by the so-called "XYZ Procedures" which were established by the Canadian Government's Order-in-Council PC-2307, April 7, 1952, Annex B. Heretofore, clearances under these procedures of overflights of Canadian territory by SAC aircraft carrying nuclear components have been accomplished on an individual basis through diplomatic channels. At a political-military meeting with the Canadians last November, the Chairman of the Canadian Joint Chiefs stated that clearance procedures under the "XYZ Procedures" had proved too cumbersome and that inter-governmental clearance of a three to six-month program with individual clearances to be accomplished at the Service-to-Service level would be acceptable to the Canadian Government.

The attached letter, therefore, constitutes a follow-up of the suggestion by the Chairman of the Canadian Joint Chiefs and should be favorably received by the Canadian Government.

Recommendation:

That you clear the attached letter for Mr. Murphy's signature requesting the Canadian Government's approval in principle of a SAC program entitled "Airborne Alert", which is scheduled for the period March-June 1959.

Attachment:

Letter to Mr. Ritchie,  
Canadian Embassy

EUR:BNA:

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By MRIP Date 7/1/96

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EO 11652: XGDS ① ② ③ ④  
Authorized By: H. D. Brewster  
August 4, 1975 *hdm*

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

I refer to arrangements for clearing flights of United States Strategic Air Command aircraft over Canadian territory where the movement of atomic weapons is involved ("XYZ Procedures") which were established by the Canadian Government's Order in Council PC 2307 April 17, 1952, Annex B.

The United States Air Force is at present testing a new operational concept for an airborne alert. Evaluation of this concept will require continuation of the test at least during the first six months of 1959. An initial test exercise was conducted during the fall of 1958 from Loring Air Force Base, Maine; it involved the launching of one fully combat configured B-52 aircraft every six hours, and clearance for overflight of Canadian territory was arranged with your Government in accordance with the above referenced Procedures. Preliminary results of that test appear favorable and have indicated a requirement for more test

data

His Excellency

A. D. P. Heeneey,

Appointed Ambassador of Canada.

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For the R/M/R Control File

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data on a broader scale, and it is proposed that a variety of Strategic Air Command units be incorporated into the test program for 1959 and 1960.

The present tentative schedule for the first six months of 1959 involves a total launch of 1,436 aircraft from various bases, beginning in March. A more detailed explanation of the plan and a monthly order of magnitude overflight schedule, which has been prepared by the United States Air Force, is enclosed. Not all of the aircraft involved would overfly Canada, and the exact number of flights which would do so cannot be given at this time. Consequently, clearance would not necessarily be requested for all flights. The numbers of flights shown in the enclosure, however, would not be exceeded and detailed schedules would be communicated to the Royal Canadian Air Force. All flights over Canadian territory would be of category "Y".

It is hereby requested, accordingly, that approval in principle for the exercise program described in the enclosure be granted by the Canadian Government. Upon receipt of such approval, detailed monthly requests, with exact routes, would be submitted on a service-to-service basis at least thirty days

in advance

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in advance. If experience from this proposed exercise indicates that the concept is feasible and supportable, future semi-annual programs will be submitted for advance approval of the Canadian Government.

It will be appreciated if you will forward this request to the Canadian Government. In view of the proposed time schedule, any steps which could be taken to expedite consideration would also be appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Murphy  
Deputy Under Secretary

Enclosure:

Explanation of  
plan and schedule.

Clearances: BNA - Mr. Willoughby    EUR - Mr. Merchant

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February 3, 1959

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ENCLOSURE

1. The Strategic Air Command (SAC) of the USAF makes a potent contribution to the security of North America, and the entire free world, by its strike capability and constant readiness to launch effective retaliation in an emergency. The maintenance of an adequate capability and state of readiness, in view of advancements in the military posture of the potential aggressor, has necessitated continual changes in SAC's operational and strategic concepts. From the need to counter the compression in time and space of missile warfare, has evolved a concept of "Airborne Alert".

2. The plan for "Airborne Alert" is made possible by present day long-range aircraft, aerial refueling, constant and instantaneous communications, and perfected safety procedures for nuclear weapons. This concept is comparable to an operation from forward bases in that the combat configured aircraft are at some distance from home base, but airborne. However, the big difference lies in the fact that destruction of the aircraft per se is the only means of preventing their strike against the enemy if ordered. A gratuitous benefit is that a strike upon the home base would not destroy any aircraft that are airborne. This system appears to offer considerable benefit in a critical period; however, continued testing is necessary to determine the feasibility from both an operational and cost view-point.

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3. An initial Airborne Alert test exercise was conducted during the fall of 1958 from Loring Air Force Base, Maine. This test exercise involved the launching of one fully combat configured B-52 each six hours. Preliminary test results appear favorable and have indicated a requirement for more test data on a broader scale. It is proposed that a variety of SAC units be incorporated into the test program for 1959 and 1960. This long-range test program is of extreme importance to the USAF in order to determine the operational feasibility of the concept.

4. The present tentative Airborne Alert test schedule for the first six months of 1959 involves a total launch of 1,436 aircraft from various bases. The proposed monthly schedule for this period is: January - 0; February - 0; March 232, April - 330; May - 454; and June - 420. Firm requirements will not exceed 14 aircraft launches per day. All of these aircraft will not overfly Canada; some routes by-pass Canada completely on either the eastern or western boundary, depending upon the home base of the aircraft.

5. Approval for overflight under the existing government-to-government procedures known as XYZ will not necessarily be requested for all the aircraft. The order-of-magnitude schedule is the maximum number planned for the first six months of 1959. Within this program, detailed monthly requests, to include exact routes,

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will be submitted on a service-to-service basis so as to be in the hands of the RCAF at least 30 days prior to the month for which the schedule covers.

6. Favorable consideration by the Canadian Government of the Airborne Alert test schedule is requested in order to permit advanced and necessary detailed planning by the USAF.

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